THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE Scripture-Revelation, *As to the* Proof *of it.* PART III.

A

SERMON

Preach'd at the

CATHEDRAL-CHURCH of St. *Paul*, *September* 2d. 1700.

BEING

The Sixth, for the Year 1700, of the LECTURE Founded by the Honourable *Robert Boyle*, Esq;

By *OFSPRING BLACKALL*, D.D.
Rector of St. *Mary Aldermary*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

LONDON,
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St. Luke XVI. 29, 30, 31.

Abraham ſaith unto him, They have Moſes and the Prophets; let them hear them.

And he ſaid, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

And he ſaid unto him, If they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead.

IN Order to ſhew that we have *ſufficient Reaſon* given us to convince us of the Truth and Authority of the *New-Teſtament*, and of all the Doctrines that are taught by it, I have formerly propounded to ſhew, 1. That we have *ſufficient Reaſon* to believe that the *Books* of the *New-Teſtament* were written by thoſe *Perſons* who are ſaid to be the *Authors* thereof; 2. That there is *ſufficient Reaſon* to give full *Credit* to them in their *Relation* of thoſe *Matters* of *Fact* which they have recorded; And, 3. That if the Matters of Fact therein recorded are true, *they* are *ſufficient Proofs* of the *Truth* and *Divine Authority* of all the *Doctrines* that are therein taught. And the two firſt of theſe Points I have, I hope, already made good.

I proceed now to the third; *viz.*

3. To ſhew, That the *Doctrine* of the *Goſpel* is well grounded upon the *Hiſtory* of it; That if the Matters of Fact recorded in the New-Teſtament are true,

they are *ſufficient Proofs* of the *Truth* and *Divine Authority* of all the *Doctrines* that are therein taught.

And here, by the *Doctrines* of the *Goſpel*, I underſtand both the *Articles of Faith* which it propoſes to our *Belief*, and the *Rules* which it preſcribes to our *Practice*. Many of the former of which are themſelves *Parts* of the *Goſpel Hiſtory*, as the *Incarnation*, *Life*, *Sufferings*, *Death*, *Reſurrection* and *Aſcenſion* of our *Saviour*; and the reſt, of both ſorts, are taught in the *New Teſtament*, either by our *Saviour* himſelf, or by his *Apoſtles*.

And I ſuppoſe it will be readily granted that all their Doctrines are *true*, and alſo of *divine Authority*, if it ſhall appear that they were *commiſſioned* and *ſent* by *God* to inſtruct the World; for *he whom God hath ſent ſpeaketh the words of God*, Joh. iii. 34.

The ſingle Point therefore to be conſider'd at this time, is, whether there be *ſufficient Evidence* from the *Matters* of *Fact* recorded in the *Hiſtory* of the *New Teſtament*, that our *Saviour* and his *Apoſtles* were *commiſſioned* and *ſent* by *God* to inſtruct the World.

And firſt, Whether there be *ſufficient Evidence* from *thence* that our *Saviour* himſelf was a Teacher *ſent* from *God*.

Now that he *ſaid* he was ſent from God, is a *Matter* of *Fact*, and a *part* of the *Goſpel Hiſtory*, Joh. xii. 49. *I have not ſpoken of my ſelf, but the Father which ſent me, he gave me a Commandment what I ſhould ſay, and what I ſhould ſpeak.*

See Joh. 5. 37, 38. 8. 38. 14. 10, 24.

And that he *ſaid* that he was the *Meſſiah* which had been foretold by the Prophets, is likewiſe *Matter* of *Fact*, and a *Part* of the ſame *Hiſtory*, Joh. iv. 25, 26. *The Woman of Samaria ſaith unto him, I know*

know that Meſſias cometh which is called Chriſt; when he is come, he will tell us all things; Jeſus ſaith unto him, I that ſpeak unto thee, am HE. Mat. 16.16,17. Mar. 9. 41. Luke 24. 46. Joh. 9. 47.

The Queſtion therefore is, whether from the *things* which are recorded of him by the *Evangeliſts*, there be *ſufficient Ground* to believe the Truth of *either* or *both* theſe Pretences; I ſay of *either* or *both* of them, becauſe *either* of them is a *ſufficient Reaſon* to receive his Doctrine as *True* and *Divine*. For which cauſe therefore I ſhall not, in ſpeaking to this Subject, diſtinguiſh between the *Evidences* which the *Goſpel-Hiſtory* affords of his being a *Prophet*, and thoſe which it affords of his being the *Meſſiah*, but ſhall propoſe them promiſcuouſly as they come to mind.

And here I ſhall conſider, Firſt, The *Credibility* of our *Saviour*'s own *Teſtimony* concerning *himſelf*; and Secondly, The *Confirmation* that was given to this Teſtimony by *God*; grounding all that ſhall be ſaid on both theſe Heads, upon the *Goſpel-Hiſtory*; the Truth of which I now take for granted, as being, I hope, already ſufficiently prov'd.

Firſt then, I ſhall conſider the *Credibility* of our *Saviour*'s own *Teſtimony* concerning *himſelf*, when he ſaid that he was *ſent* by *God*, and that he was the *Chriſt* the *Son* of *God*.

And I know 'tis commonly ſaid that a Man is not to be believed in his own Caſe. And this very thing was objected to our *Saviour* by the *Jews*, Joh. viii. 13. *Thou beareſt Record of thy ſelf, thy Record is not true.* But this Saying is not without Exception.

When indeed what a Man witneſſes is for his *own Benefit*, his Teſtimony, if it be ſingle, may reaſonably be rejected; eſpecially, if any Proof be made that at other times he hath told a *Lye*; or done any other

other *ill thing* for his Advantage; But otherwiſe a Man's Teſtimony *concerning himſelf* may be credible; nay in ſome caſes it may be more credible than another Man's; becauſe he may ſometimes be *ſurer* of what he ſays concerning himſelf than another Man could be. And therefore our *Saviour*, who in *Joh.* v. 31. allows of the Reaſonableneſs of that Saying; *If I bear witneſs of my ſelf my Witneſs is not true*; yet when this very thing was afterwards objected to him by the *Phariſees*, in the Place before-cited, makes anſwer in the following words; *Tho' I bear Record of my ſelf, yet my Record is true, for I know whence I came*, &c.

Joh. 8. 14.

And that the Teſtimony of our *Lord* concerning his *own divine Miſſion* was ſuch as we might rationally give Credit to, tho' we had no other Evidence of it, will, I ſuppoſe, ſufficiently appear, if theſe following things be conſider'd.

1. That his whole *Life* (according to the Account that is given of it by the *Evangeliſts*, which we now build upon, as true) was in all Reſpects *ſpotleſs* and *unblameable*; *He did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth*; He was *a Lamb without blemiſh and without ſpot*. And this he himſelf urges as a Reaſon why his Teſtimony ought to be credited; *Joh.* viii. 46. *Which of you convinceth me of Sin? and if I ſay the Truth why do ye not believe me?* And a very good Reaſon it was; for it could not juſtly be ſuſpected, that a Perſon of whom no other ill thing could be ſaid, was yet indeed in the whole Courſe of his Life guilty of a Crime of the greateſt Magnitude, *viz.* of *Lying* in the *Name* of *God*; of ſaying, that the *Lord* had *ſent* him, when indeed the *Lord* had not ſent him, nor ſpoken by him.

1 Pet. 2. 22.
1 Pet. 1. 19.

2. It

2. It may be alſo conſider'd, that this *Teſtimony* of our *Lord*, tho' it was concerning himſelf, yet was not *for himſelf*; I mean it was not for his own worldly Advantage. And this Conſideration he himſelf likewiſe offers to the *Jews*, as an Argument of the Truth of his Teſtimony, *Joh.* vii. 18. *He that ſpeaketh of himſelf ſeeketh his own Glory; but he that ſeeketh his Glory that ſent him, the ſame is true, and no unrighteouſneſs is in him.* Had the Doctrine of our *Lord*, which he pretended was what God had commanded him to teach, been contriv'd to advance the Worldly Honour and Greatneſs of himſelf or his Followers, this would have been a juſt Prejudice againſt it, and a reaſonable Ground of ſuſpecting that he ſpake of himſelf; but when it was evident to all that heard his Diſcourſes, (and is no leſs ſo to us that read them) that he ſought not his own Glory in any thing, but the Glory of him that ſent him, and that his whole Doctrine tended to advance the Honour of God, and to promote the Practice of Piety and Virtue in the World; this rendred his Teſtimony very credible, when he ſaid he was *ſent* by *God* to teach it to the World; for when a Doctrine is plainly worthy of God, and *according to Godlineſs*, it may reaſonably be preſumed that *God* is the Author of it. 1 Tim. 6. 3.

3. It may be further conſidered, that this Teſtimony of our *Lord* concerning himſelf was ſo far from being to his own Benefit, that it was as much as any thing could poſſibly be to his *Worldly Diſadvantage*, expoſing him to the Envy and Malice of the *Jews*, and to the Jealouſie of the *Romans*, and to all the cruel Sufferings which he endured from both of them. And certainly a Man's Teſtimony concerning himſelf may be allow'd to be credible if it be againſt his

his own Intereſt, if he himſelf be a great Loſer or Sufferer by what he Teſtifies; for it can't be imagined what elſe but only the Evidence of Truth, and an Obligation to declare it, ſhould ever induce a Man to ſay ſuch things concerning himſelf, as will procure his own miſchief.

And I know not what can be ſaid to avoid the Force of this Argument for the Truth of our Saviour's Teſtimony that he was *ſent* from *God*, and that he was the *Meſſiah*, unleſs it be that he was diſappointed in his Expectation; and that he hoped to make himſelf Rich and Great in the World by theſe Glorious Pretences, tho' in the Event it prov'd otherwiſe. But the *Goſpel-Hiſtory* furniſhes us with a very clear and full Anſwer to this Objection in thoſe many *Predictions* of our *Lord* therein recorded concerning his own Sufferings; whereby it clearly appears, that the Sufferings which befel him for giving this Teſtimony concerning himſelf did not happen to him *unexpectedly*, but that he knew long before all that afterwards came to paſs. And therefore I ſay again, that no Reaſon can be imagin'd why he ſhould *ſay* that he was ſent from God, but only becauſe he knew it was true, and had receiv'd a Command from his Father to declare this Truth to the World. Eſpecially if it be conſider'd further——

Mat. 16. 31. 20. 17.

4. Laſtly, That he continu'd to teſtifie the ſame at his *Death* which he had done before in his Life, giving thereby the beſt Aſſurance that a Man can give of the Truth of his Teſtimony. For the main Matter of his Accuſation to *Pilate* was that he had given out himſelf to be the *Meſſiah*, and the *Meſſiah* was (according to the Expectation of the *Jews*) to be a great Temporal *King*; had our Lord therefore but denied this

this Charge, had he but granted that he was not the *Meſſiah*, he might have ſaved his Life. But this he would not do; he diſowned indeed the *falſe Notion* that the *Jews* had of the *Meſſiah*; *my Kingdom*, ſays he, *is not of this World*; But that he was a *King*, and that he was the *Meſſiah* he boldly owned, as well when the Queſtion was put to him by the *Roman Governor*, who had Power of Life and Death, as when it had been put to him before by the *High-Prieſt*. This therefore is a ſtrong Confirmation of the Truth of this Teſtimony of our *Lord*; and is alone ſufficient to make it credible, that he *witneſſed* the ſame *good Confeſſion before Pontius Pilate*, which he had done before his own Nation, and Sealed his Witneſs with his Blood. For 'tis not to be ſuppoſed that any Man tells a known Lye for nothing; and it was plainly then too late for him, to hope for any good to himſelf in this World by perſiſting in this Teſtimony; (his only Hope had been in retracting it) and 'tis not credible that any Man ſhould be ſo fooliſh as to expect to better himſelf in the other World, by dying with a Lye in his mouth.

John 18. 26. Mat. 27. 11. Joh. 18. 37. Mat. 26. 63, 64. Mar. 14. 61, 62. 1 Tim. 6. 13.

Thus, I hope, it appears that the *Teſtimony* of our *Lord* concerning his *own divine Miſſion*, was *credible* in *it ſelf*; ſo that we might rationally believe, that he *came* from *God*, and that he was *Chriſt* the *Son* of *God*, altho' we had only his own Word for it.

But we have more than his own Word for it; *I am not alone*, ſays he, *Joh.* viii. 16, &c. *but I and the Father that ſent me. It is alſo written in your Law, that the Teſtimony of two Men is true; I am one that bear Witneſs of my ſelf, and the Father that ſent me beareth Witneſs of me.* And this was the other thing I propoſed to conſider, in order to ſhew the *good Rea-*

ſon that we have to believe that our *Saviour* was *ſent* from *God*, and that he was the *Meſſiah*; *viz.*

Secondly, The *Confirmation* that was given to this Teſtimony of our *Lord*, by *God* himſelf. And this was given ſeveral ways.

1. *God* bare him Witneſs by the *Teſtimony* of *ancient Prophets*; And to this our Saviour frequently appeals, *Joh.* v. 39. *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have Eternal Life, and they are they which teſtifie of me*; And again, *v.* 46. *Had ye believed Moſes, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me.* 2Pet. 1. 18, 19. And this St. *Peter* (comparing it with that *Voice* from *Heaven* teſtifying him to be the *Son* of *God*, of which he himſelf had been an Ear-witneſs) calls *a more ſure word of Prophecy*. And indeed it was as certain an Evidence of his divine Miſſion as could be deſir'd.

For it was a Matter of the greateſt Concern to the World, to diſcern the promis'd *Meſſiah*, that ſo they might know in whom to Believe, and from whom to expect Salvation: And to this End *God* was pleaſed, by the mouth of all his holy *Prophets* ſince the World began, to give ſeveral *Marks* and *Characters* of the *Meſſiah*, by which he might be certainly known, and readily diſtinguiſh'd from all Impoſtors; for they foretold exactly the *Time* of his *Coming*, his *Pedigree*, and the *Place* of his *Birth*, the *manner* of his *Life*, the *Things* he was to *do*, the *Sufferings* he was to *undergo*, and all the remarkable *Accidents* that were to befall him in this World; all which Predictions were punctually fulfill'd in the Perſon of our bleſſed *Saviour*, as muſt be granted by every one that allows the truth of the *Goſpel-Hiſtory*. And this is an undeniable Proof that he was the *Meſſiah*; for it is manifeſtly inconſiſtent with the *Wiſdom* of *God*, when he

he meant to give *Marks* and *Characters* by which the *Meſſiah* might be certainly known, to give only ſuch as might belong to *another Perſon* no leſs than to *him*; and it is no leſs inconſiſtent with his *Goodneſs* that his Providence ſhould ever permit that all the *Marks* and *Characters* of the true *Meſſiah* ſhould meet together in an *Impoſtor*; becauſe by this, Mankind muſt have lain under an inevitable Neceſſity of being cheated in a Matter of the greateſt Conſequence to their Eternal Salvation.

But the ancient Prophecies of *Chriſt* were many of them in Types or Figurative Expreſſions, not readily to be underſtood 'till they were accompliſh'd, nor then very eaſie to be applied by every one to the Perſon of the true *Meſſiah* without the Help of a Teacher. *How can I underſtand what I read* (ſaid the *Eunuch*, even when he was reading one of the plaineſt Prophecies of *Chriſt* that is in the Old Teſtament) *except ſome man ſhould guide me?* And therefore God was pleaſed to give a yet more certain and diſtinct Knowledge of him to the Men of that Generation in which he appear'd; And this he did—— Acts 8. 31.

2. By the *Teſtimony* of *John* the *Baptiſt*, who was *a burning and a ſhining Light*; and did not, as the former Prophets had done, only lay down *Marks* and *Characters*, by the wiſe Application whereof Men might diſcern the *Meſſiah* when they ſaw him; but *pointed* to him, as it were with his *Finger*, as he ſtood before their Eyes, ſo that the ſimpleſt among them could not but know whom he meant; *Behold*, ſays he, *the Lamb of God, which taketh away the Sin of the World. This is he of whom I ſaid, after me cometh a Man which is preferred before me.* Joh. 1. 29, 30.

And to this *Testimony* of *John* our *Saviour* himself frequently appealed, as to a Testimony that was full to the purpose and could not be denied; *Ye sent unto John*, says he, *and he bare witness unto the Truth*, Mat. 21. 23. &c *Joh.* v. 32. And when the *Chief Priests* and *Elders* question'd him about his Authority, he perfectly confounded them by only asking them whether the *Baptism of John was from Heaven or of Men*; for that *John* was a *Prophet*, altho' he did no Miracles, was so evident to all by the wonderful manner of his Birth, and the miraculous Circumstances that attended it, that they could not; and he was also so generally receiv'd and accepted among the People as a *Prophet*, that they dared not deny it: *If*, they say, *we shall say of Men, all the People will stone us, for they be persuaded that John was a Prophet*; and yet had they granted this, which they could not deny, they had answer'd their own Question, and seen clearly by what Authority our *Saviour* acted and taught; for no Testimony of his divine Mission could be plainer and clearer than that of *John* was; and it was a thing granted by the *Jews*, that *he is a Prophet without all doubt and needs no farther Trial, unto whom another Prophet bears Witness.*

3. Another way by which *God* gave Witness to our *Saviour*, that he was *sent* by him, and that he was the *Messiah*, was by a *Voice* from *Heaven*; which Testimony was given him three times.

Mat. 3. 16, 17. Mar. 1. 10, 11. Luke 3. 22. First, at his *Baptism*, when *being come up out of the water, the Heavens opened, and the Spirit like a Dove descended upon him, and there came a Voice from Heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.* And of this Voice 'tis highly probable St. *John Baptist* was an Ear-witness; for 'tis said expressly,

preſly, that *he ſaw the Spirit deſcending like a Dove from Heaven, and abiding on him*, and that was at the ſame time that the Voice was utter'd. John 1. 32.

A Second time was at his *Tranſfiguration* on the *Mount*, when the Glory of *God* appearing in a Cloud, as it had anciently us'd to do, there came a Voice out of the Cloud which ſaid, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed, hear ye him.* And at the uttering of this Voice, *three* of his Apoſtles were preſent, *two* of which have witneſſed the ſame to us under their own Hands. Ex. 24. 15. *&c.* Mat. 17. 5. Mar. 9. 7. Luke 9. 35. 2 Pet. 1. 17. John 1 14. 1 John 5. 7.

A Third time was after the *raiſing* of *Lazarus*, when were preſent not only his *Apoſtles* who conſtantly accompanied him, but ſeveral others both *Jews* and *Greeks*. And this Voice was ſo loud as to be heard by all that were preſent, tho' not by all ſo diſtinctly and articulately, as it was by ſome, who, as 'tis probable, were nearer than the reſt; which was the occaſion of that Difference that was among the People concerning it; *ſome ſaying that it Thundered, and others, that an Angel ſpake to him.* To doubt therefore of his divine Miſſion whom *God* thus teſtified to by *Voices* from *Heaven*, is to *make God* himſelf *a Lyar*, as the *Apoſtle* ſpeaks, *becauſe we receive not the Record that he gave of his Son.* Joh. 12. 20, 28. Ver. 29. 1 Joh. 5. 10.

4. Another way by which *God* gave Witneſs to the *divine Miſſion* of our *Saviour* was by enduing him with the *Gift* of *Prophecy*, or foretelling things to come. Several Inſtances of which we meet with in the *Goſpel-Hiſtory*; for he foretold very often his own Sufferings and Death, with all the remarkable Circumſtances thereof; He ſaid that he ſhould be betray'd by one of his own Diſciples, when none of them ſuſpected that there was a falſe Brother among them, Mat. 16. 21. 20. 17. *&c.* Mar. 9. 31. 10. 33. Mat. 26. 21. John 6. 70.

them, and the Traytor himself knew not yet the falseness of his own Heart; He told *Peter* but a few Hours before, that he should deny him thrice; when He at the same time was very confident of his own strength, and declar'd himself resolv'd to die rather than deny him once; He told the rest of the Disciples that they would all forsake him, when they every one profess'd themselves resolv'd to suffer with him, rather than leave him; He signified before by what Death he should die, and who should be instrumental therein; He assured his Disciples that after three Days he would rise again, and appointed them a Place in *Galilee*, where they should all see him; He Propheſied that notwithstanding the Contempt he was had in, and the greater Contempt that his ignominious Death would bring upon him, his Religion should by *their* means (a Company of poor illiterate Fishermen) be preached with good success in all Parts of the World; He foretold likewise the utter Destruction of *Jerusalem* and the Temple, before that Generation passed away, and the Dispersion of the *Jews* into all Nations: And several other things, which it would take up too much time now to mention, he foretold should be just in that manner in which they afterwards came to pass.

Mat. 26. 34.
Mat. 26. 31.
Joh. 3. 14. 8. 28. 12. 32.
Mat. 16. 21. 26. 32. 28. 16.
Mat. 24. 14. 3. 19.
Mat. 24. Mar. 13. Luk. 21.

Concerning which it may be noted, that some of his Prophecies were fulfilled *soon after* they were spoken, the punctual Accomplishment whereof, was to those that both heard them spoken and saw them fulfilled, an evident Proof of his Prophetical Spirit, and a just Ground of expecting the Accomplishment of all his other Prophecies in their Season; and that others were not to be fulfilled 'till a *good while after*, the Accomplishment whereof at the time foretold, and

long

long after the Predictions thereof had been recorded by the *Evangelists*, was a good Evidence to those that lived then, and is also to us that live now, and either read the Accomplishment thereof in History, or see the same with our own Eyes, that he was endued with a Divine Spirit; and likewise takes away all reasonable Ground of a Suspicion which we might otherwise have had, that in those Instances wherein both the Prophecy and the Accomplishment of it are related by the same Authors, the Prophecies were forged after the Events were come to pass.

Now if this be true (and it is certainly true, if the *Gospel-History* be so) that our *Saviour* did foretell many things which afterwards happened, and those very casual and contingent things, depending upon the free will of Men, this was an evident token that he had a divine Spirit; for none can certainly foretell such things but *God* only, or those whom he enlightens with his Spirit; And therefore the Prophet *Isaiah* made this Challenge to the *Idols* of the *Heathens*, Isa. 41. 23. *Shew the things that shall be hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods.*

And if to this it should be objected that future Events have been sometimes foretold, by such as have not been true Prophets of God, nor enlightned by his Spirit, as by *Diviners*, *Astrologers* and *South-Sayers*, and by the *Oracles* of the *Heathens*; this may be granted without any weakning of the Argument I am now upon for the Proof of our Saviour's divine Mission.

For there may be some future Events unforeseen by us, and yet depending so intirely upon the Course of Natural Causes, that unless hindred by a Miracle, they will as certainly come to pass as the Sun will rise to morrow;

morrow; And these, the *Devil*, who understands much better than we do the Power and Course of Nature, may foresee and consequently foretell; and When such a thing is foretold, we, who understand very little of Nature, may think it a Prophecy, whereas in truth there is no more of a Prophetical Spirit in the *Devil* when he foretells such things, than there is in a skilful *Astronomer*, when he Calculates and foretells to a Minute for several Ages to come, the Motions and Eclipses of the Sun, Moon, and Planets.

And even in future *Contingencies*, 'tis no wonder that the Events have sometimes verified the Predictions of the *Devil* and his *Prophets*; for this also may well enough be accounted for, without allowing that any Being hath a certain Foreknowledge of future Contingencies but God only, if we do but suppose, as we may very reasonably do, that the *Devil* hath a perfecter Knowledge than we can have, of the Counsels, Intrigues and Interests of Men, that he understands their Tempers and Inclinations, that he hath lived a great while, and made very exact observations, that he hath had a long Experience of things, and hath also a notable sagacity much beyond what is in any Man; for so even a wise observing and experienc'd Man, may without a Spirit of Prophecy, see much further before him than Men commonly do, and may foretell, by a Guess that shall rarely fail, a great many things which a less thinking and experienc'd Man would never have thought of; And when the thing happens that was foretold, it may be past the Skill of others to judge, whether it was foretold by a Sagacious Guess, or by a certain Foreknowledge of what would be.

And

And that the Predictions of *Diviners*, and the *Oracles* of the *Heathens* concerning future *Contingencies*, have been no more than only probable Conjectures (unleſs when they have been borrowed from divine Prophecies, as they may have often been) is evident by their uncertain Accompliſhment; Some things indeed have happened as they have been foretold, but others have not ſo happened; and becauſe the *Devil* could not always certainly tell what the Events of thoſe things would be which he was Conſulted with about, he commonly gave out his *Oracles* in *ambiguous Expreſſions*, that ſo, whatever happen'd he might be thought to have foretold it. And when the Predictions of any Perſon pretending to Prophecy, have fail'd in ſome Inſtances, tho' in others they have been accompliſh'd, this is a certain Argument that he did not Propheſie by a divine Spirit; according to what is ſaid, *Deut.* xviii. 21, 22. *If thou ſay in thine heart, How ſhall we know the word which the Lord hath not ſpoken? When a Prophet ſpeaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not nor come to paſs, that is the thing which the Lord hath not ſpoken, but the Prophet hath ſpoken it preſumptuouſly.* In which words it ſeems to be implied (tho' it be not expreſly ſaid) that if the thing foretold did come to paſs, and eſpecially that if of many things which the Prophet had foretold, and which could not be fore-known by the greateſt Skill in Natural Cauſes, (ſuch as are the Actions of a free Agent) not one thing fail'd, but his words were made good by the Event in every particular, they might then depend upon it that he was a true Prophet; except only in one Caſe mentioned in *Deut.* 13. *viz.* When he made uſe of that Credit which the Accompliſhment of his Predictions had Deut. 13. 1, 2, 3.

gain'd him, to draw Men from the Worship of the true and only God, to the Worship of Idols. And accordingly 'tis observ'd in 1 *Sam.* iii. 19, 20. that because the *Lord did let none of Samuel's words fall to the Ground, all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that he was established to be a Prophet of the Lord.*

The before-named Exception having therefore no Place in our *Saviour*, for his Doctrine was, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*; Mat. 4. 10. and there being not one of those many Predictions that he gave forth (tho' several of them were concerning the most casual Events that could be) which has not been in its due time fulfilled, we may safely conclude that he was a true *Prophet* of *God*, and consequently, that he ought to be hearkned to in every thing that he said.

5. Another *Testimony* that was given by *God* to the *divine Mission* of our *Saviour*, was by the *Power* of working *Miracles*, more and greater Miracles than ever had been done before since the beginning of the World, the Relation of which makes up a great Part of the *Gospel-History*.

Mat. 11. 4, 5. Joh. 10. 25, 37, 38. 14. 11. 15. 24. And to these our *Saviour* himself frequently appeals, as to a most evident Proof that he was sent by God, and that he was the Son of God; *Joh.* v. 36. *The Works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me.*

And indeed what better Evidence can be desired that a Person speaking in the Name of *God* is sent by him, than to see him do the *Works* of *God*, that is, such Works as cannot be done but by the Power of *God*? And that our Saviour's Miracles were such, cannot, I think, be doubted by those who believe they are truly

truly related in the Gospel, which it is now supposed they are.

And if to this it be said, that the first Opposers of Christianity both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, who either saw the Miracles of our *Saviour*, or had such good Assurance thereof from Eye-Witnesses, or Credible History, that they could not deny them, yet were not thereby convinc'd that he was a *Prophet* of *God*, but rather thought that he did all his mighty Works by *Magick Art*, and by the *Help* of the *Devil*; I answer,

1. That 'tis a thing which we cannot be sure of, that the true Reason why any of those who saw our Saviour's Miracles, or were persuaded of the Truth of them, did yet refuse to receive him as a Prophet sent from God, was because they were not convinc'd that his Miracles were done by a divine Power; for Men do not always act according to their Judgments; for we read of some of the *Chief Rulers* in *Joh.* xii. 42. that they *believed on him*, that is, they were convinc'd in their Judgments, by the mighty Works that he did, that he was the Person he pretended to be, *but they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the Synagogue; for they loved the Praise of Men more than the Praise of God.* And therefore I think it most probable, that they who attributed those Miracles of his which they could not deny, to the working of the *Devil*, did not, nay could not believe what they said, but only said it, because they were resolv'd never to receive a Doctrine (whatever Evidence was given of the Truth of it) that was so contrary as our Saviour's was, to their Prejudices, Lusts, and Worldly Interests; and they could not tell what else to say to justifie themselves to the World. But,

2. If their Blasphemy in ascribing our Saviour's Miracles to the power of the *Devil*, was not meerly malicious, 'twas, however, most evidently groundless. For,

(1.) Tho' the *Devil* be without doubt of much greater Power than we are, and, understanding better than we do the Force of Natural Causes, can do many things which to the Eyes of Men may appear Miraculous, because it may be past their Skill to give an Account of them by Natural Causes; there is no reason however to believe that he can do a true Miracle; that is, that he can ever alter the Course of Nature, or produce any Effect but by the Means of Natural Causes, working in such a manner, and by such Laws and Rules as *God* hath appointed: And therefore the *Apostle* calls those strange Appearances

2 Thes. 2. 9. which are done by the *working of Satan, Lying Wonders.*

But they were not *Lying Wonders* which were done by our *Saviour*; they did not only seem to be done, but were done, and they were Miracles not only in appearance but in truth, being many of them such Effects as were evidently above and beyond the Power of Nature, and therefore such as could not be done but by a Power Superiour to Nature, that is, by God's.

For who, but he only who at first brought all

Mat. 14. Mark 6. Luke 9. John 6. things out of nothing, could with five Loaves, and two small Fishes, satisfie the Hunger of more than five thousand Persons, leaving a Remainder of more than twice the number of Baskets-full of Fragments,

Luk. 7. 11, &c. Joh. 11. 39, &c. that there had been of Loaves at the first? Or who could restore to Life a dead Carkass that began to putrefie, but he only who first form'd it out of the Dust of the Ground? Who could call back the departed Soul,

Soul, and fix it to its former Reſidence, but he only into whoſe Hands it was returned, and who firſt breathed into our Bodies theſe Immortal Spirits?

And as to ſome other of his Works which may be thought to be ſuch as might be produc'd by the working of Nature only, the manner in which they were done, plainly ſhews that they alſo were done by a Power Superior to Nature; for thus, a Sick Man may be reſtor'd to perfect Health, in time, and by degrees, by the uſe of proper Medicines, and ſuch a Cure we reckon Natural; But thoſe were plainly Super-natural Cures which were wrought, as our Saviour's for the moſt part were, without the uſe of any Medicines, only by a Word ſpeaking, and many times at a great diſtance; and by which thoſe who had been long Sick or Infirm, or Cripples, were reſtor'd to perfect Health and Strength in an inſtant of time. To ſuppoſe therefore that the *Devil* can thus at his Will alter the Courſe of Nature, is to attribute to him ſuch a Power as is peculiar to the *God* of *Nature, who only doth great Wonders.* But Pſ. 72. 18. 136. 4.

(2.) If the Miracles of our *Saviour* had been only ſuch as we might reaſonably think did not exceed the Devil's Power to do, yet that they were not wrought by his Help, and conſequently that they were done by the Power of *God,* is abundantly evident from the *Deſign* of them; which was to eſtabliſh a Doctrine the moſt contrary that could be to the Devil's Intereſt. For *to this Purpoſe the Son of God was manifeſted that he might deſtroy the works of the Devil*; and he did it, by *preaching to Men to turn from the vanities of Idols to the worſhip and ſervice of the Living God, who made Heaven and Earth*; and by *teaching them to deny Ungodlineſs and Worldly Luſts, and to live Soberly, Righteouſly and Godly in this preſent World.* Now 1 Joh. 3. 8. Act. 14. 15. Tit. 2. 12.

Now the *Devil* is certainly as ſubtle as he is powerful, and therefore if he has indeed any power to alter the courſe of Nature and to do a real Miracle, he would not, however, we may be ſure, make uſe of this Power againſt himſelf, he would not thereby aſſiſt another to deſtroy his own Kingdom. And by this Argument our *Saviour* himſelf clearly confuted this Calumny, in *Mat.* xii. 25. When the *Phariſees* had ſaid that *he caſt out Devils by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils*; he anſwer'd, *Every Kingdom divided againſt it ſelf is brought to Deſolation——and if Satan caſt out Satan, he is divided againſt himſelf; how then ſhall his Kingdom ſtand?* And

(3.) Laſtly, As it is not credible that the *Devil* has ſuch power; or if he has, and was let alone to himſelf, that he would make uſe of this power to deſtroy his own Kingdom; ſo neither is it credible that *Almighty God*, who has all power in his Hands, and can controul and limit the workings of the *Devil* and all created Beings as he pleaſes, would ever permit the *Devil* to out-do himſelf in ſuch wonderful Operations; ſo that more and greater Miracles ſhould be done by an *Impoſtor*, than ever had been done before by any *true Prophet*; which yet is manifeſtly the Caſe, if indeed our *Saviour* was an *Impoſtor*.

2 Tim. 3. 8. He ſuffer'd indeed *Jannes* and *Jambres* to *withſtand* his Servants *Moſes* and *Aaron* for ſome time, and to do, or ſeem to do ſome wonderful Works like to theirs; for *Aaron caſt his Rod upon the Ground and it became a Serpent*, and ſo did they: And *Aaron ſtretched out his Hand over the Waters, and the Frogs came up and covered the Land; and the Magicians did ſo with their Inchantments, and brought up Frogs upon the Land of Egypt.* But tho' he ſuffer'd the *Magicians* thus to contend

Ex. 7. 10, 12.

Ex. 8. 6, 7.

contend with his *Prophets*, the Victory was clearly on his Prophet's ſide; for *Aaron's Rod ſwallowed up their Rods*; and when the *Magicians* endeavour'd by their Inchantments *to bring forth Lice*, as *Aaron* had done, they could not; but were forced to own before *Pharaoh* that it was the *Finger of God*; and from that time forward ſtrove no more for Victory. Ex. 7. 12. 8. 18.

And thus it may be conſiſtent with the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, at any time, in order *prove his People, and to know whether they love the Lord with all their Heart*, to *ſuffer* the *Sign* or *Wonder* foretold by an *Inticer* to *Idolatry* to *come to paſs*; and to diſtinguiſh his *Elect* from Reprobates, to permit *falſe Chriſts and falſe Prophets, to ſhew great Signs and Wonders*; and in juſt Judgment upon ſuch as will *not receive the love of the Truth that they may be ſaved*; to let them alone to be deceived by that *wicked one, whoſe Coming is after the working of Satan, with all Power, and Signs and Lying Wonders, and with all Deceiveableneſs of Unrighteouſneſs in them that periſh.* But it cannot, I think be reconciled to theſe Attributes of God, that he ſhould permit greater Wonders, and more clear and undoubted Miracles to be done by a falſe Prophet, than ever were done by any true Prophet; becauſe this would be too great a Trial for Humane Nature; ſuch Signs and Wonders would be ſufficient to deceive even thoſe that enquire after Truth with the greateſt ſincerity of Heart. And I cannot conceive it conſiſtent with the Goodneſs of God, to permit that ſuch as are of honeſt Minds, and ſincere Lovers of Truth, ſhould, after a fair Examination of the Proofs on both ſides, have greater reaſon to embrace Error than Truth; which yet they plainly have in caſe the Miracles done by falſe Prophets Deut 13. 1, *&c.* Mat. 24. 24. 2 Theſ. 2. 8, 9, 10.

phets be more and greater than have been done by any true Prophet, unleſs the Falſeneſs of the Doctrines which they would thereby eſtabliſh be more evident than the Truth of their Miracles. So that upon the whole, I think we may well conclude this Head, with thoſe Words of *Nicodemus* to our *Saviour*, Joh. iii. 2. *We know* (we are aſſured of it, we have no Reaſon to doubt of it) *that thou art a Teacher come from God, for no Man can do theſe Miracles that thou doeſt, except God be with him.*

6. Another way by which *God* himſelf bare Witneſs to the Truth of our Saviour's Teſtimony, was by *Raiſing* him from the *dead*. To this great Miracle he himſelf often referred thoſe that had any doubt of the Truth of his other Miracles, as what could not but be ſatisfactory to all that were capable of receiving Satisfaction. And this was the chief Subject of the *Apoſtle's* Sermons, the main Proof that they inſiſted upon to convince Men that *Jeſus* was the *Chriſt*: And they ſeem to have no doubt upon them, that if they could but perſuade Men of the Truth of his Reſurrection, they would readily own that he was the *Chriſt*, and without further ſcruple receive every thing that he had taught them in the name of God as a divine Truth. *By this*, ſay they, *God has given Aſſurance unto all Men, that he has ordained him to be the Judge of the World: By this*, ſay they, *he was declared to be the Son of God with Power*; becauſe it was a thing evident to all, that no Power leſs than God's could raiſe the dead.

Joh. 2. 19. Mat. 12. 40. 16. 4.

Acts 2. 24. 32. 3. 15. 4. 10. 10. 40. 13. 30.

Acts 17. 30.

Rom. 1. 4.

When therefore this was done, (and it was done if the *Goſpel-Hiſtory* be true) this was a plain Seal ſet by God himſelf to our Saviour's Teſtimony; a *Seal* not poſſible to be Counterfeited, and wherein the Divine Power

Powers ſo clearly and deeply engraven, that whoever looks attently upon it, muſt be ſatisfied whoſe Seal it is. So that to grant the Reſurrection of our Saviour, and yet to doubt whether he was the Perſon he gave out himſelf to be, is to doubt of the *Truth* of *God* himſelf; for granting our Saviour's Reſurrection, it can't be ſuppos'd that he was an Impoſtor, without ſuppoſing that *God* himſelf did conſent to the Impoſture, and work the moſt evident Miracle that ever was done, on purpoſe to perſwade Men to believe a Lye.

I ſhall mention at preſent but one way more whereby *God* was pleas'd to confirm our Saviour's Teſtimony of himſelf; And that was——

7. By the *Witneſs* of the *Holy-Ghoſt*, which witneſs was given to him at his *Baptiſm*, when the *Holy-Ghoſt deſcended in a viſible manner as a Dove and reſted on him.* It was alſo given to him during the whole Courſe of his *Miniſtry*; for the *Holy-Ghoſt* not only deſcended, but *abode upon him*; and therefore St. *Peter*, ſpeaking of him, ſays that *God anointed him with the Holy-Ghoſt, and with Power.* Joh. 1. 32, &c. Act. 10. 38, &c.

But that Witneſs of the *Holy-Ghoſt* which I now chiefly deſign, was *that* which was given to him after his Aſcenſion into Heaven, and was an evident Token that all power in Heaven and Earth was then committed to him; I mean thoſe *Gifts* of the *Holy-Ghoſt* which he ſhowred down on his *Apoſtles* on the *Day of Pentecoſt*; *when being met together, there came ſuddenly a ſound from Heaven as of a ruſhing mighty Wind, which filled all the Houſe where they were ſitting, and there appeared unto them Cloven Tongues like as of Fire, which ſat upon each of them*; whereupon *they were all filled with the Holy-Ghoſt, and began to ſpeak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.* Acts 2. 1, &c.

And this *Teſtimony* of the *Holy-Ghoſt* our Saviour promis'd before ſhould be given to him; *Joh.* xv. 26. *When the Comforter is come, whom I will ſend unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth which proceedeth from the Father, he ſhall teſtifie of me:* And the Teſtimony indeed was very plain and full; for by this it clearly appear'd that all his former Miracles had been true, and had been wrought by a divine Power, when even after he had left this World, he was ſtill able to make good this Promiſe to his Diſciples, and to empower them to do greater Works in his Name, than he himſelf had done while he was living upon Earth; This was a clear Demonſtration that he was the beloved Son of the Father, and *was*, as St. *Peter* ſays, *exalted at God's right hand*, when he did ſhed forth that wonderful power upon his *Apoſtles*, of which all that then dwelt in *Jeruſalem*, or had come thither from all parts of the World to Worſhip, were Eye and Ear-Witneſſes.

Act. 2. 33.

And this *Teſtimony* of the *Holy-Ghoſt* was given to our *Saviour*, not at that time only, not one Day and no more, but was continu'd to be given to him all the time of the Apoſtle's Preaching, (who were alſo enabled to communicate to others by laying on of Hands, the ſame Miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt which they themſelves had receiv'd) until they had finiſh'd their Miniſtery, and planted Chriſtian Churches in all the Countries of the then known World.

Act. 2. 38. 8. 17. 10. 44. 19. 6.

Thus I have briefly mention'd the great *Evidence* that the *Goſpel-Hiſtory* affords of the *Truth* of our Saviour's *Teſtimony* of *himſelf*; the *Matters* of *Fact* I have taken for granted, as being parts of the *Goſpel-Hiſtory*; the Truth of which has been, I hope, already ſufficiently prov'd; and the Evidence it ſelf is

ſo

ſo clear and full, that I thought it needleſs to open it in more Words than I have done; for that the Teſtimony which *God* did by all theſe ways give to our *Saviour*, is a rational Inducement to believe the Truth of what he ſaid concerning himſelf, is what I think, can't be doubted by thoſe that allow themſelves any time to conſider things.

This I'm ſure I may ſay, that if this ſtrong Evidence that the *Goſpel-Hiſtory* affords of our Saviour's divine Miſſion be not ſufficient to prove it, there never yet has been ſufficient Evidence of the Truth of any divine Revelation; I had almoſt ſaid, nor ever can be, but that I know it is not for us to ſay, what Infinite Power and Wiſdom can do.

But as ſome *Jews* in our Saviour's time ſaid, *when Chriſt cometh, will he do more Miracles than theſe which this Man hath done?* So I may ask, and I believe it will be very difficult to make anſwer to it, *when Chriſt cometh* (if indeed *he* be not already come, if indeed that *Jeſus* on whom we believe be not *he*) how ſhall we do to know him? What greater Aſſurance can he give us that he is the *Chriſt*, than *Jeſus* hath given? What better Reaſon can we ever have to believe any Meſſenger that ſhall be ſent from *God*, than we have to believe our *Saviour*? Joh. 7. 31.

For we have as much Reaſon, (ſuppoſing the *Goſpel-Hiſtory* to be true) to believe *him* to be ſent from *God*, as we have to believe any thing; we are as ſecure that we are not deceiv'd in *him*, as we are that we are not deceiv'd in the plaineſt Matters of ſenſe. For the beſt, the only ſecurity that we have that our ſenſes do not deceive us, and that every thing in the World is not quite otherwiſe than it appears to us to be, is the *Goodneſs* of *God*; and this ſame ſecurity we have that

we are not deceiv'd in our Saviour's divine Miſſion. Nay we are more ſecure of this than we are of that; becauſe it is more plainly inconſiſtent with the Goodneſs of God, to deceive us in a Matter on which our everlaſting Welfare depends, than in Matters only of this Life, which are the chief things for which our bodily Senſes are of uſe to us: And if indeed we are deceiv'd in our *Saviour*, it muſt be ſaid that *God himſelf* has deceiv'd us, having given us all the Reaſon imaginable to believe *him* to be, as he ſaid he was, the *Son* of *God*.

And now having been ſo large in ſhewing the *Evidence* that there is from the *Matters* of *Fact* recorded in the *Hiſtory* of the *New Teſtament*, that our *Saviour himſelf* was a *Teacher ſent from God*, I ſhall not need to ſpend much time in ſhewing that his *Apoſtles* were likewiſe *Commiſſion'd* by *God* to inſtruct the World; and conſequently that we ought alſo to receive all the Doctrines taught by *them* (whether in their *Epiſtles*, or in their *Diſcourſes*, interwoven by St. *Luke* with his *Hiſtory* of their *Acts*) as true and divine; for——

1. There is plainly no Reaſon why we ſhould not receive them as ſuch; becauſe they are the very *ſame* that our Saviour taught, and *no other*. Some Points of Chriſtian Doctrine are indeed more largely explain'd and handled by the *Apoſtles* in their Epiſtles, than they are in thoſe Diſcourſes of our Saviour that are recorded by the *Evangeliſts*; but between the *Doctrines* taught by our *Lord himſelf*, and thoſe taught by the *Apoſtles*, there is ſuch a perfect *Harmony* and *Agreement*, that if we had only their own Word for it, that they ſpake and wrote by the Inſpiration of the Spirit, we might ſecurely believe them; for tho' one Man may, without Inſpiration, ſay the ſame thing

which

which another before him has ſpoken by Inſpiration; yet if the ſecond ſays that he alſo is inſpir'd, there can be no Hurt, tho' there may be a Miſtake in believing him; ſeeing whether the Man was Inſpir'd or no, 'tis certain that the *Doctrine* was. But,

2. If there be any Doctrines taught by the *Apoſtles*, which we do not ſee were taught before by our *Saviour*, I ſay there is however from the *Hiſtory* of the *Goſpel*, *Evidence enough* of *their* divine Miſſion alſo; ſo that we may very ſecurely take upon their Credit, as true and divine, any Doctrine which they have inſtructed us in. For,

(1.) That they were *ſent* by our *Saviour*, is paſt all Diſpute, if the *Goſpel Hiſtory* be true; *Joh.* xx. 21. *As my Father hath ſent me, ſo ſend I you*; and again, *Mat.* xxviii. 19, 20. *Go ye and diſciple all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghoſt, teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you.* And that he had Authority to grant them ſuch a Commiſſion, he ſhews in the words before; *All Power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth; Go ye therefore and teach all Nations*, &c. And,

(2.) That they were *taught* by *God*, and *enlightned* by his *Holy Spirit*, is what can't be doubted, if we believe the power of our Saviour, and the Truth of the Goſpel; for before our *Lord* went from them, *he breathed on them, and ſaid, Receive ye the Holy Ghoſt*: Joh 20. 22. And to what *Purpoſes* the *Holy-Ghoſt* was to be given them, he had told them before; *The Comforter which is the Holy Ghoſt whom the Father will ſend in my Name, he ſhall teach you all things, and bring all things to your Remembrance whatſoever I have ſaid unto you.* Joh. 14. 26. And, *when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into* Joh. 16. 13.

into all Truth; being therefore thus taught by the Spirit of Truth, our *Saviour* might well say as he does, *Luke* x. 16. *He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* And,

(3.) Lastly; We have all the reason in the World to receive *them* as *Messengers* from *God*, and to believe that all that they have taught is the Will of God, because they had the *same Attestation* of *God* to the truth of their Doctrine, that our Saviour himself had to his. I do not mean that *God* did bear them Witness *all* those ways by which he bare witness to our *Saviour*, for that could not be; but he bare witness to them all those ways by which it was proper for him to do it, and by which he had born witness to any former Prophets.

For he bare witness to them that they were sent by him, by the *Testimony* of our *Saviour*, as he had done to our *Saviour* by the *Testimony* of *John*: And if the Testimony of a *Prophet* was credible concerning our Saviour, much more is the Testimony of the *Son of God* highly credible concerning a Messenger sent by him.

Joh. 13. 22. 20. 21.

He bare witness to them also by enduing them with the *Gift* of *Prophecy*; for *when the Spirit of Truth is come*, says our Saviour, *he will shew you things to come.*

Joh. 16. 13.

And lastly, he bare witness to them, by that which is the most plain and sensible proof of a divine Mission, *viz.* By the *Power* of *Miracles*, and manifold *Gifts* of the *Holy-Ghost*. *The Lord worked with them, and confirmed their word with Signs following*, says St. *Mark*. And, *with great Power*, says St. *Luke*, *gave the Apostles witness of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus.*

Mar. 16. 20.

Acts 4. 33.

And

And the greater part of the *Hiſtory* of the *Acts of the Apoſtles* is ſpent in relating the wonderful Works that they did, by the Name of *Jeſus*, and the Power of the *Holy-Ghoſt*, in confirmation of the Truth of their Doctrine.

But St. *Paul* (perhaps it will be ſaid) of whoſe Writing are moſt of the *Epiſtles*, was not one of *them*, not *called* by our *Saviour* to be an *Apoſtle* as *they* were, nor ſo much as an Eye and Ear-witneſs of our Lord's Miracles and Doctrine; what Reaſon then have we to receive *his* Writings as Portions of *Holy Scripture?*

I anſwer, as good, tho' not in every particular juſt the ſame that we have to receive the Writings of the other *Apoſtles* as ſuch.

For *he* was Converted, and Ordain'd to be an *Apoſtle*, in a more wonderful manner than they were; as you may ſee in *Acts* 9.

And as our *Lord* himſelf gave witneſs to *their* Divine Miſſion, ſo he did alſo to *his*; *Acts* ix. 15. *He is* ſays our Lord, *a choſen Veſſel unto me, to bear my Name before the Gentiles, and Kings, and the Children of Iſrael.*

To *him* alſo as well as to *them*, the *Spirit* foreſhew'd things to come; ſeveral Proofs of which we may obſerve in the *Hiſtory* of the *Acts*, and in his *Epiſtles*. Act. 20. 22, 25. 27. 10. 22. 2 Th. 2. 3, &c. 1 Tim. 4. 1, &c. 2 Tim. 3. 1, &c.

And Laſtly; His *Speech and his Preaching was*, as theirs, *in Demonſtration of the Spirit, and of Power.* In *him* all the *Signs of an Apoſtle* were ſeen, no leſs than in them, *viz. Signs and Wonders, and mighty Deeds.* And of *him*, with *Barnabas* in Company, it is that St. *Luke* ſpeaks, when he ſays, that *the Lord gave Teſtimony to the word of his Grace, and granted* 1 Cor. 2. 4. 2 Cor. 12. 12. Acts 14. 3.

Signs

Signs and Wonders to be done by their Hands. And the latter part of the *History* of the *Acts*, from the 10*th* Chapter to the End, contains little else but an account of St. *Paul*'s Preaching, and of the *Miracles* that were done by the Power of *God* to confirm the Truth of *his* Doctrine; So that if we believe the *Gospel-History*, we can no more doubt of *his* divine Mission and Inspiration than we can of *theirs*; we must conclude, that if *they* were *Apostles*, so was *he*; that if *they* were *Ministers of Christ*, so was *he* too; forasmuch as in nothing *he* was *behind the very chiefest Apostles*; so that consequently we have as much Reason to believe *his* Writings to be Inspired, as we have *theirs*.

2 Cor. 11. 23.
2 Cor. 11. 5.
2 Cor. 12. 11.

And now by all that hath been said, I hope, I have fully made good the Point I was to prove; *viz.* That if the Matters of Fact recorded in the New Testament are true, *they* are *sufficient Proofs* of the *Truth* and *divine Authority* of all the *Doctrines* that are therein taught, whether by *Christ* himself, or by his *Apostles*. For if it be true that they were *sent* by *God* to instruct the World, and to declare the Will of *God* to Mankind; (and that they were, is sufficiently prov'd by their *Credential Letters*, which we have now perused and examin'd) we can no more doubt the truth of those things which *they*, as the *Messengers* and *Ambassadors* of *God* have deliver'd to us in his Name, than if we had heard *God* himself uttering the same by a *Voice* from *Heaven*. So that I cannot but perswade my self that the *Proofs* which have been offer'd in the foregoing Discourse of the *Truth* of all the *Doctrines* that are taught in the *New Testament*, are *sufficient* to convince any Rational and Considering Man of the *Truth* of *any Doctrine*, the *Falsity* whereof is not *Notorious* and *Self-evident*.

And

And therefore this, I think, is the only thing that can with any ſhew of Reaſon be pretended by any Perſon to juſtifie his not receiving the Goſpel as a divine Revelation, *viz.* That the Matter of it, in ſome Particulars, is ſuch as will not admit of any Proof at all; becauſe no Arguments can make a thing credible, which in it ſelf is *incredible*. And ſuch, it may be pretended, ſome of the Chriſtian Doctrines are which are taught in the *New Teſtament*; and eſpecially the Doctrine of the *Trinity*.

And that this Doctrine is clearly taught in the *New Teſtament*, we freely grant. But why ſhould it be deem'd *incredible*? Does it imply a Contradiction? Can they that except againſt it, or againſt the *Goſpel-Revelation* upon the Account of it, ſhew that it is impoſſible it ſhould be true? Can they demonſtrate that 'tis impoſſible for an Infinite and Eternal Being to beget a Son in his own Likeneſs, *the brightneſs of his Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon*? Or can they ſhew it to be impoſſible that there ſhould be a third Perſon proceeding from both theſe? Heb. 1. 3.

No, perhaps they'll ſay; But that theſe *three* ſhould be *one*, as the Scripture teaches, *that*, they think, exceeds all the Meaſures of Belief; *that*, they can't but think a manifeſt *Contradiction*.

But why ſo? Do the *Chriſtians* hold, or does the *Scripture* ſay, that they are *three* and *one* in the *ſame reſpect*? does it ſay that the *one God* is *three Gods*; or that thoſe *three* whom it ſpeaks of as *three diſtinct Perſons*, aſcribing perſonal Acts to each of them, are nevertheleſs but *one ſingle Perſon*? No, it only tells us in general that *theſe three are One*. But *how* they are *Three*, or *how* they are *One*; wherein conſiſts their *Diſtinction*, and wherein their *Unity*, it ſays not, at

Psal. 131. 1.

least not very plainly. And I think it the safest Course in such high Matters, in *Matters* so much *too high for us, not to exercise our selves,* nor to pretend to be Wise above what is written.

If therefore there be no Contradiction in the Doctrine of *a Trinity in Unity*; (as there is not unless we say that *God* is *One* and *Three* in the *same Respect*) that's enough; that's all that needs to be said upon this Occasion. For tho' we may (as indeed we must) allow it to be an *incomprehensible Mystery*, there is no Reason to Cavil at the *Gospel-Revelation*, or to deny it to be a true divine Revelation upon this Account.

For we live in a World of *Mysteries*; we must believe *Mysteries* in abundance whether we will or no; I mean, there are some Truths so very plain even to our Reason that we can't doubt of them, and yet so very high and *Mysterious*, that we can no more fathom them than we can the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*.

For thus, that *Matter* is *not Eternal*, we are as sure almost as we are of any thing, for Matter could not exist of it self; and yet how *Matter* should be made out of *nothing*, is as incomprehensible by us, as 'tis how the *One* undivided *Godhead* does personally subsist in the *Father*, *Son* and *Holy-Ghost*.

And thus again, that *God* is *Eternal* we are certain by Reason; (for by *God* we mean the first Cause of all, and he who was first could have none before him) and yet that any thing should exist without a *Cause* of its *Existence* is unaccountable; and if we were not sure that it must be so, we should be ready to say that it was impossible, and a manifest Contradiction that it should be so.

Thus, I say, we are led by the Light of Reason only to a firm belief of some Truths, which yet we can

give

give no Account of by our Reaſon; and I think, 'tis very hard that we will not receive an incomprehenſible Doctrine, upon the Credit of a very plain and well atteſted Divine Revelation, as well as we do and muſt do the ſame upon the Evidence of Natural Reaſon.

Eſpecially conſidering the *Subject* of this incomprehenſible Doctrine, which is the *Eſſence* or *Subſtance* of *God*, who is an *Infinite* Being and ſo muſt needs be *incomprehenſible* by our *finite Underſtandings*; by our Underſtandings, I ſay, which are ſo very *ſhallow*, that I believe I may truly ſay, we underſtand not the *Eſſence* or *Subſtance* of any thing. For we underſtand not what is the *Eſſence* or *Subſtance* of *Matter* or *Body*, tho' it be a thing that all our Senſes are continually exerciſed about; all that we know of it, is ſome *Properties* or *Accidents* thereof; that it is ſomething (but *what* we know not) that has Figure and Dimenſions, that is hard, ſoft, fix'd, fluid or the like. And we underſtand no more, but rather leſs, what the *Eſſence* or *Subſtance* of our *Soul* is; all that we know of it, is, that 'tis ſomething that *thinks*, and becauſe it thinks we know it muſt be *ſomething*; and becauſe none of thoſe Properties which we obſerve in Matter, have any Relation at all to *Thought*, we conclude that the *thinking Soul* is an *immaterial Something*; tho' what is *immaterial* cannot be explain'd by us, unleſs we could ſay what is *material*.

Seeing therefore (as the Wiſe *Hebrew* ſpeaks) *we do hardly gueſs aright at things that are upon Earth, and with Labour do find out the things that are before us*; is it any wonder that we cannot *ſearch out*, and fully know and comprehend *the things that are in Heaven*? If we are not able to underſtand even our own *Eſſence*, and how by an ineffable Union of Spirit with Matter, the Wiſd. 9. 16.

the whole together becomes *one Man*; is it any Wonder, that by all our *Searching* we *cannot find out God, that we cannot find out the Almighty unto Perfection?*

Job 11. 7.

And what hath been thus briefly said, is, I hope, sufficient to shew that a Divine Revelation cannot reasonably be excepted against or refused, only upon the Account of some Mysterious and Incomprehensible Doctrines that are therein contain'd. And if not, then, I hope, what was said before is enough to satisfie any considering Man, that the Gospel is a true Divine Revelation.

To Conclude all therefore; having *Christ and his Apostles* continually *Preaching* to us in the *Books* of the *New Testament*, *Let us* (as the Text says) *hear them*; Let us Reverence these Sacred Writings as the *Oracles* of *God*, and *receive with Meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save our Souls. But let us be Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only, deceiving our own selves.* For, (as the *Apostle* argues, *Heb.* ii. 3, &c.) *If the word spoken by Angels was stedfast, and every Transgression and Disobedience receiv'd a just Recompence of Reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own Will?*

Jam. 1. 21, 22.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

IN Sermon IV. and V. page 14. line 23. for *more* read *most*; p. 47. l. 12. for *they* r. *he*. l. 27. for *there* r. *them*. In Sermon VI. p. 5. l. 3. for *him* r. *her*.